

## An Other Perspective on the Knowledge Base in Canadian Educational Administration<sup>1</sup>

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In this paper I offer a feminist perspective on past and present scholarship in Canadian English-language education administration. After noting some pertinent aspects of the historical development of “academic educational administration” in Canada, I pose the questions “Where are the women in this world or these worlds of Canadian educational administration? What were and are their experiences? their realities? their voices?” In response, I review and synthesize selected, recent Canadian research pertaining to women in educational administration. Based on that review, it seems that women’s experiences and feminist thought are only beginning to affect our knowledge base; they are, as yet, “other” perspectives.

Dans cet article, l’auteure offre une perspective féministe sur les universitaires au sein de l’administration dans les milieux d’éducation anglophones. Après avoir noté certains des aspects pertinents du développement historique de l’administration en éducation au Canada, l’auteure pose les questions suivantes: “Où sont les femmes dans ces milieux de l’administration en éducation au Canada?” “Quelles ont été et quelles sont leurs expériences?” “Comment ont-elles fait et font-elles entendre leur voix?” En répondant à ces questions, l’auteure fait la synthèse des recherches récentes au Canada sur les femmes au sein de l’administration dans les milieux d’éducation? À en juger d’après cette synthèse, il semble que les expériences des femmes et la pensée féministe ne font que commencer à avoir des incidences sur nos connaissances de base; il s’agit pour l’instant, de perspectives “marginales.”

For some years now, academics have assessed and discussed development of the “knowledge base” in the relatively new field of scholarship focusing on the organization, administration, and leadership of schools. Both critical and not-so-critical perspectives on this topic have appeared. Among the critical perspectives are feminist ones, particularly in the United States (e.g., Shakeshaft, 1989a) and Australia (e.g., Blackmore, 1993). Understandably, those writers have concentrated on the issues and scholarship of their own nations. No similar feminist<sup>2</sup> assessment and synthesis has yet been done in Canada, by a Canadian and about Canadian work.

We have just begun to consider Canadian women’s experiences and contributions as dimensions of our research and theorizing about Canadian educational administration and leadership. Whereas scholarship on educational administration in this country has for over a decade incorporated “Canadian” and “education”

as dimensions of our knowledge base, gender is still hardly acknowledged as an issue. Given the power of many educational administrators to define or influence educational agendas in many settings, this is a serious omission.

After noting some pertinent aspects of the historical development of “academic educational administration”<sup>3</sup> in Canada, I consider research by and about Canadians presented in Canadian scholarly contexts that explicitly focus on educational administration, usually refereed journals and the annual conference of the Canadian Association for the Study of Educational Administration (hereafter, CASEA; a member organization of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education). I also discuss pertinent material in readily available books or more general refereed Canadian education journals, emphasizing work published between 1988 and 1993. I limit the scope of my review in these ways because I want to show what is being legitimized as significant — what is defined as knowledge — by and for Canadians in our field of study and practice. The legitimized work constitutes a sort of “canon” for Canadian academic educational administration, as well as a reference point for future research and practice. It is therefore important to consider what perspectives and viewpoints are, and are not, represented in that “canon.”

#### OH, CANADA

According to Allison (1991), the extensive urbanization and consolidation of public schooling that occurred early this century in the United States began somewhat later in Canada, and varied in its progress from province to province and region to region. The small, rural school district was pervasive across Canada until quite recently. Levin and (J.) Young (1993) note that those districts were controlled by “the local parents, or more particularly the fathers, since most school trustees were men” (p. 14). Concomitantly, the provincial school inspector was the predominant administrative figure here until the 1960s, later in some areas. These inspectors, carefully screened by provincial bureaucrats, were almost invariably male. Apparently, neither the inspectors nor any one else seriously questioned their ability to supervise the many (often female) elementary school-teachers in their purview, although their own teaching experiences were generally limited and in secondary schools.

Both urbanization and school district consolidation gained momentum during the 1950s and early 1960s. Whether provincially or locally appointed, school district superintendents gained visibility and status as they faced the more complex administrative challenges presented by larger school divisions. These changes fostered receptiveness to the academic study of educational administration and were catalysts for “transplanting” educational administration as a field of academic study from United States to Canadian soil (Allison, 1991, p. 32). In 1956, the first Division of Educational Administration in Canada was established at the University of Alberta, with the assistance of a grant from the Kellogg

Foundation and the support of the Canadian Education Association. Graduate students (male) from across the country arrived to be “educated” as school administrators.

Much existing academic knowledge about educational administration was constructed in and for the American milieu. At the University of Alberta, and subsequently elsewhere in Canada, it was disseminated through American textbooks and American-educated professors (Allison, 1991, p. 33; Hickcox, 1981, p. 1; Miklos, 1992, p. 5). Awareness of the need to create a Canadian knowledge base is evident, however, in the considerable proportion of early dissertations describing the Canadian “context of educational administration” (Miklos, 1992, p. 40), that is, the diverse legislative/legal, demographic, cultural, and economic factors (Miklos, 1992, p. 55) influencing education and its administration in Canada.

The increasing predominance of the theory movement in American academic educational administration diminished the significance of that notion of context. As there had been earlier in the United States, there was now an urgent need among Canadian practitioners for the credibility of a “professionalized” (Allison, 1991, p. 3) and “scientific” approach to the administration of public education. Little attention was paid to “the distinctive quality” of the (Canadian educational) organizations studied (Miklos, 1992, p. 88).

The transplant “took,” then. A slender Tree of Grand Theory sprouted and spread some branches across Canada as graduates from the University of Alberta’s new program in Educational Administration—most of them men—returned or moved on to high-ranking administrative positions in provincial departments/ministries of education and school systems, and university faculty appointments. The discourse underway and the research undertaken, like that in other social sciences of the time, consisted primarily of white middle-class men speaking to one another and assuming that their experiences and priorities could be generalized to all inhabitants of their world(s).

Speaking from within this milieu, the late Thom Greenfield raised his voice in the mid-1970s to challenge positivism and the theory movement. Greenfield was by then a professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. His own graduate studies in educational administration at the University of Alberta during the late 1950s and early 1960s and his early work as a researcher were entirely within the positivist paradigm from which he later so decisively turned away. He dedicated his career from that turning point until his death in 1992 to a critique of positivistic educational administration and an emphasis on viewing the formal organization as a social invention of its members. He conceptualized the organization as a “moral order” in which people with more power impose their notions of organizational realities and their values on, and attempt to control the interpretations and actions of, those with less power (Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993). Thus, understanding the web of (individual and group) experiences, meanings and values that, situated in a particular milieu, constitutes an organization

became recognized as an important issue of organizational life and theory. Reaction to Greenfield's challenge has ranged widely, but most commentators agree that his influence in Canada and the Commonwealth has been substantial, stimulating "alternative approaches that have served to broaden the field" (Allison, 1991, p. 34).

Greenfield opened up whole new areas of thought and discussion about school organizations, but the impact of gender was not one of them. Quite the opposite. Although he stated unequivocally that "Language is power. It literally makes reality appear and disappear" (1984, p. 154), he always chose to write in "the inclusive language of tradition" (Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993, p. 225), using masculine references such as "man" and "he" to "include" both women and men. His sensitivity to issues of language, personal experience and meaning, values, and power and control in organizational life shares common ground with feminist critique. Indeed, he saw himself as representing an Other perspective and living as an outsider (Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993). It is a loss that he refused to acknowledge gender as a significant dimension of knowledge de/re/construction and life in organizations.

Writing in a 1981 collection called *What's so Canadian about Canadian Educational Administration?* Greenfield made the startling assertion that Canadian educational administration researchers "know very little about schools as schools in Canada and very little about the administration of them" (Greenfield, 1981, p. 17). The very title and purpose of the collection signalled the new focus on meaning and context, and an increasing national self-consciousness about Canadian educational administration. A similar awareness and concern was voiced at meetings of CASEA (Bergen & Quarshie, 1987, p. 20). It constituted an acknowledgment that Canadian research in educational administration had not told us much about Canadian schools and schooling, and certainly not in any coordinated, nation-wide fashion.

Because of constraints involving primarily population and jurisdiction, incentives and supports for meta-analysis, critique, synthesis, and dissemination of Canadian educational administration research are few. Lacking, as we do, the incentive of a large Canadian market for textbooks (Hickox, 1981, p. 4; the current professoriate in educational administration is about 100 people and CASEA membership under 200), especially graduate-level ones, there have been only a few attempts to pull together and look over Canadian research in educational administration.<sup>4</sup> Our small population also limits to a handful the number of scholarly and professional journals focusing on Canadian educational administration and receiving national distribution or international attention.<sup>5</sup> Our difficulties are compounded by the absence of a national infrastructure for education and research about education, due largely to provincial jurisdiction over this area. As a result, it has always been challenging to get a sense of the "big picture," the mosaic of Canadian research about educational administration or the gaps in that mosaic.

Nonetheless, during the 1980s, our researchers began—or perhaps continued, but with more range and depth—to join Canadian and education with administration and to do so by seeking “understandings . . . from the perspective of the [study] participant” (Miklos, 1992, p. 166). Various qualitative, interpretive, and critical research approaches have achieved respectability and acceptance in at least some academic educational administration circles. Particularly where newer educational administration scholars have been hired, bringing with them different questions and issues for research, knowledge is now being constructed as often as truth is being discovered, and voices can be heard asking, “Whose knowledge?” or “Who benefits?” There is greater emphasis on the diverse meanings and values individuals and groups ascribe to various policies and practices. Such work has expanded substantially our knowledge about and ways of understanding Canadian schools and their contexts.

Some of us, however, will continue to make problematic the knowledge base issue in Canadian educational administration because it is not yet inclusive of the changing demography and the diversity characterizing our nation (Levin & J. Young, 1993), women and gender being my case in point. Naomi Hersom—one of the first women to complete a Canadian doctorate in educational administration, and that was in 1969—recently identified “the changing nature of the family,” “the role of women in the [paid] work force and in the professions,” and “the ways we educate girls and women” as issues particularly significant for Canadian education and educators (Hersom, 1992, p. 7). And, Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1990) assert that there is “a broadening of the opportunity base for women in positions traditionally associated with men” (p. 163). To what extent are these changes and assertions apparent in our research? Where are the women in this world or these worlds of Canadian educational administration? What were and are their experiences? their realities? their voices?

#### WHERE ARE THE WOMEN?

Despite the demanding variety of experiences and tasks encountered and endured by pioneer women teachers in Canada during the nineteenth century (Danylewycz & Prentice, 1986; Fleming, Smyly, & White, 1990), the view persisted that women were not capable of teaching older children or managing schools (Nixon, 1987; B. Young, 1990). Teaching school did provide some Canadian women with a “liberating” opportunity to find employment on the western Canadian frontiers, and/or to make the transition to other professional, political, and domestic roles, but the pattern of work for these women was one of increasing segregation (by grade and lower pay) and external control (Danylewycz & Prentice, 1986). They were virtually powerless, at the combined “mercy” of the local school trustees who employed them and the male provincial inspectors who supervised them. The provincially appointed inspectors were themselves engaged in taxing work—a concerned, but very busy patriarchy of former secondary schoolteachers

charged with supervising and supporting a widely dispersed array of teachers, largely female and teaching elementary school (Allison, 1991).

The hegemony of the male provincial inspectorate continued unquestioned and unrestrained into the 1960s even when, at times, our American counterparts were electing a number of women superintendents (Allison, 1991, p. 37; Shakeshaft, 1989b). Then, during the expansionary decades of the 1960s and the 1970s, when inspectors gave way to school district superintendents, men continued to be treated as the logical candidates for virtually all administrative positions (Reynolds, 1987). This "logic" was reinforced and supported by policies requiring married, and later pregnant, women teachers to resign their appointments (Reynolds, 1987). In addition to the publicly voiced rationale that married women's main responsibility was to care for husband, family, and home, these policies ensured that most women teachers on staff were too young and inexperienced to compete seriously for administrative appointments (Reynolds, 1987).

In Canada even today, men hold a wider variety of administrative positions pertaining to schools than do women, and men occupy those positions in greater numbers, although 60% of Canada's elementary-secondary schoolteachers are women (Statistics Canada, 1993, p. 207). In 1991/92, 25% of Canada's male teachers held school-based administration appointments, a proportion unchanged from a decade ago. Although only 7% of our female teachers held comparable administrative appointments in 1991/92, they did make up from one-quarter to one-third of the country's school-based administrators, more than double the proportion who were women a decade ago (Statistics Canada, 1993, p. 209). The traditional gendered division of labour in school organizations continues nationwide, but is modified by the increased proportion of administrative positions women hold.

Given provincial jurisdiction over education, there may be considerable variation from province to province with respect to policies, practices, and proportional statistics (Rees, 1990; Smith, 1991; B. Young, 1990). A comprehensive province-by-province demographic overview of the Canadian situation was commissioned in 1988 by the Canadian Education Association (CEA), when Naomi Hersom was its president. One purpose of the study was to establish a statistical baseline regarding the distribution of women and men holding various positions other than classroom teacher in each province (Rees, 1990). Project director Ruth Rees (1990) found "the situation of women and men in positions within education systems across Canada reflects that of tradition rather than employment equity" (p. 91); this is particularly so in some provinces (Gill, 1993) and in secondary schools (Dempsey, 1991; Tabin & Coleman, 1993).

There are also, however, some indicators of change requiring further exploration. Women have sought out the Ontario principalship certification course in ever-increasing numbers since two key "filters" were removed in the early 1980s (Rees, 1991; see also Smith, 1991). The changes were to eliminate the requirements of mandatory summer residency, and of referral (which meant only candi-

dates recommended by their school districts could enrol). In 1989, some time after the policy changes, women were being hired for administrative jobs in the same proportion as they graduated from the certification program (Rees, 1991). As well, although the CEA survey data showed that central office positions with direct formal authority continue to be occupied primarily by men (Ayim, 1991; Rees, 1990), Dempsey and Reynolds' 1992 survey of Ontario school board supervisory officers indicated that at least half the 94 women supervisors took up their present positions in the preceding four years. The findings both of Dempsey and Reynolds and of Rees suggest more women may have been appointed to administrative roles in Ontario during the later 1980s and early 1990s.

The data available at this time leave many questions unanswered. We are starting to have the sort of foundational information needed for further policy research (Smith, 1991), but we have too little of it. As yet, the statistics tend to support contentions that systemic discrimination, subtly reinforced and rationalized by traditional socialization, continues to be a major factor in the underrepresentation of women in Canadian school administration (Ayim, 1991; Nixon, 1987; Rees, 1990). We lack adequate information about the nature and extent of changes in the comparative "qualifications" (however defined) and the subsequent appointment and career development of women aspiring to formal administrative roles in Canadian school systems (Smith, 1991). We need more, and current, demographic data tracking qualification and selection patterns in different parts of the country.

Until recently, except for a doctoral study done in the mid-1970s by Mary Nixon, the issue of women in school administration and leadership received little attention from Canadian educational administration scholars, most of whom were men. Data from readily available sources (CASEA, 1993; Miklos, 1992) indicate that only a handful of doctoral studies explored this topic. And although it is to be hoped that feminist perspectives may have enriched the study of other topics, there is no such indication. Not one doctoral dissertation receiving the annual CASEA award has been based on a feminist analysis, although several recent award-winners have been women.

Since the mid-1980s, however, women have become more visible and vocal in Canadian departments and programs of educational administration. The number of women graduate students in educational administration has increased substantially (Nixon, 1985; Smith, 1991). My own calculations indicate that approximately 50% of the faculty members who have been appointed on continuing, rather than sessional, contracts are women, which in combination with numerous retirements of men means that women now make up about 20% of Canada's English-speaking professoriate in educational administration (see also Epp, 1993). More women qualify for academic appointments each year. Concurrently, however, the number of tenure-track vacancies in our area is decreasing, due to financial constraints in many Canadian universities.

The increased number of presentations at CASEA conferences on issues of women in administration likely reflects these demographic changes. Of 315 papers presented at the 10 annual CASEA conferences between 1974 (the initial conference in) and 1986, 6 presentations addressed the topic of women in educational administration (Bergen & Quarshie, 1987, p. 8). There were four times as many presentations on some popular topics. My review of CASEA programs for the subsequent seven years through 1993 showed over two dozen presentations on women/gender issues in educational administration, most in or since 1990. This substantial increase in attention is almost certainly due to the increased presence of women as graduate students and faculty members, and the somewhat expanded range of topics on women and gender now being explored.

Given this relatively recent interest, it is unsurprising that much research and writing undertaken since Nixon's initial work in the mid-1970s has focused on demographics (as I have already described), on barriers to women's entry to educational administration, and on career profiles or biographies of women educators and administrators (Shakeshaft, 1989b). What have these studies contributed to the Canadian knowledge base in educational administration?

Research on women's careers conducted during the past decade provides some of the stories behind the statistics that we do have available to us. These are largely interview studies documenting women's own stories and observations about their career-related experiences in various parts of English-speaking Canada. Most studies have focused on experiences of women who are school-site administrators, in elementary schools (Tabin & Coleman, 1993), secondary schools (Dempsey, 1991; Genge, 1993), or both (Reynolds, 1988), some also including those few women in central office positions (Dempsey & Reynolds, 1992; Gill, 1993; Russell, 1993; Willis & Dodgson, 1986; B. Young, 1992, 1993). Only Russell reports her participants to be members of visible minority groups.

These studies allow us to hear women's own voices, and taken together could provide some basis for conceptualizing Canadian women educators' career development linked to educational administration. The experiences and perspectives documented in this research are quite similar to one another and to the findings of studies in other English-speaking countries, wherever women enter administrative worlds in which there are very few women in comparable roles (e.g., Blackmore, 1993; Shakeshaft, 1989b). To date, however, Canadian studies have had little reference to one another; I therefore offer the following synthesis of themes from these studies as a possible reference point for future analysis and comparison.

With the exception of some very recent appointees (Tabin & Coleman, 1993), women in these studies have assumed that men would be the administrators. The women applied for administrative appointments only when superordinates, most often men, encouraged them to do so, although some studies indicate that women from visible minorities (Russell, 1993) and women secondary schoolteachers who



were viewed as having “family responsibilities” (Dempsey, 1991) received no encouragement at all. In all cases, they were reluctant to appear “too” ambitious, partly because it was regarded as inappropriate. Also, they were unsure of their ability to fulfil administrative roles, given their own and other people’s (for example, colleagues, superordinates, parents) stereotypes about the attitudes and behaviours required of school administrators. They were also deterred by the apparent incompatibility between the demands of administrative work and their domestic responsibilities. Therefore, it was chance remarks, unexpected job openings, and unsought role re-definitions or transfers that fostered changing aspirations for these women; readiness to recognize and capitalize on unexpected opportunities was more characteristic than career planning. The women attributed their appointments to working hard, being “in the right place at the right time,” and maintaining a sense of humour—succeeding in spite of, not because of, being women.

While they were teachers, these women enjoyed the support of their female teaching colleagues, but they did not find an equivalent support group when they became principals, because there were so few women in administrative circles. Consequently, these women administrators were often very isolated, lacking access to the informal male networks that provided the men with so many forms of opportunity—to socialize, to seek advice and information, to observe and imitate acceptable conduct, to become known to those with more power and influence, to participate in the informal decision making of the organization. Additionally, these women’s initial administrative appointments were often “marginal,” part-time, or provisional, or to specialized and especially difficult settings. Nonetheless, the women were reluctant to acknowledge any covert forms of discrimination against them.

Many study participants experienced career and marriage and/or childcare responsibilities as two mutually exclusive directions in life. Some were/are single and childless, proportionately far more of them than men in similar positions. Except for some very recent administrative appointees (Tabin & Coleman, 1993), women with children at home often expressed guilt about their professional/family role conflicts. Women in all the studies repeatedly describe the “competing urgencies” of paid work, academic studies (usually done part-time), and family responsibilities, and take pride in dealing with their complex lives. Given these complexities, most of the women are “late bloomers” according to traditional (male) career norms of achievement. Their careers are often characterized by part-time paid work, fulfilling lateral moves, interruptions in paid work to carry out unpaid care-giving activities, and delayed or slower hierarchical progression, when it occurs at all. Living with competing urgencies followed by late blooming seems a common career path for many of today’s women school administrators.

Women who have moved into school administration when and where there are more women in comparable positions express somewhat different views (Rey-

nolds, 1988; Tabin & Coleman, 1993). These women actively sought administrative appointments, sometimes in the face of obstacles but often with widespread encouragement. They were more strategic in their career-related planning and decisions, choosing activities and contacts with an administrative line of career development (as well as more general professional development) in mind. They described the existence of women's support networks, which some of them valued highly although others reported the demise of such groups as the number of women increased (Genge, 1993; Reynolds, 1988; Tabin & Coleman, 1993).

These women were inclined to see their appointments as linked to a change in societal attitudes; some were concerned that others perceived their appointments as token. Once appointed, they felt the combined pressures to be role models for other women and to face sex-role stereotypes persisting among some parents and community members. In Russell's (1993) study, women articulated an intensified sense of responsibility as role models, representatives, and advocates for their ethnic communities.

Taken all together, these recent studies highlight various dimensions of and issues in Canadian women educators' career development, when they become or aspire to become administrators. The documentation of women's stories about their experiences is in itself an expansion of the Canadian educational administration literature and a recognition of many women's strengths and achievements. We need also, however, to examine more closely some of the issues provoked but not elaborated in research to date.

For example, it is unclear to what extent traditional gendered divisions of labour in school organizations are actually being erased. The varying environments of the province and the school district regarding existence and implementation of employment equity policy appear to affect opportunities available to women and men in those contexts. But, so does the "level" of schooling, whether it is the traditionally female domain of the elementary school or the more traditionally male domain of the secondary school. Differences in context between rural and urban settings may be another aspect of this question. Studies explicitly attending to different aspects of context would be a welcome addition to our literature.

Another issue that might be explored is the conventional attitudes, taken by study participants and researchers alike, toward administrative work and careers. Most studies take for granted the conventional definitions of career achievement and the structure of administrative work, but the reasons for that are not elaborated. As Russell (1993) notes, although alternative definitions of opportunity and success are proposed in the literature, the participants in her study "associate[d] both terms with upward movement only" (p. 3). Even non-aspirants seem to take for granted the existing construction of administrative roles (Dempsey, 1991; Gill, 1993; Nixon, 1987), and their separation from classroom teaching (Tabin & Coleman, 1993). Why?

Many women administrators in these studies appear to shape their lives to fit the demands of administrative roles constructed by men whose wives worked full-time in their homes providing various supports to their husbands' paid-work careers. That is, we know something of individual women's strategies for adjusting their personal lives in relation to their professional lives. If women in educational administration today are also reshaping their paid-work roles in relation to (even equally shared) family and other domestic responsibilities, we do not find the evidence—or their strategies—in these studies. Or, are there organizations where such reconceptualization is not being left to individual initiative? If not, then, are we seeing—to adapt Reynolds' (1987) phrase—a rather limited liberation?

How do women who become administrators enact their roles and use personal and organizational resources available to them? Some Canadian researchers have begun to explore women's beliefs and practices as school administrators and educational leaders (Dempsey, 1992; Fennell, 1992; Genge, 1993; Gill, 1993; Gougeon & Hutton, 1992; Harris, 1993; Tabin & Coleman, 1993; B. Young, Staszewski, McIntyre, & Joly, 1993; J. H. Young, 1993). That is, researchers are investigating not only who "gets there" and how, but what they do, why, and how that affects school organizations once they are there (Shakeshaft, 1989a).

Parallel to the early emphasis on "exceptional women" (since by definition any woman in educational administration was exceptional) in the literature on women's careers, much research to date celebrates the administrative and leadership styles of women reputed to be exemplary practitioners. The studies contribute to the expanding literature on "women's ways" of administering, managing, leading (e.g., Blackmore 1989; Shakeshaft, 1989b). Like other work in this area, Canadian studies tend to characterize "women's ways" as emphasizing communication and caring interpersonal relations focused on building a community whose central concern is for the welfare of students and their learning. Frequently, this approach involves high visibility in the school, shared power as a means of affirming teachers' expertise and improving the quality of decision making, and an active desire to improve professional practice in the school, which may include structural supports for staff collaboration and development. To many of us, this sort of approach is a welcome change from the authoritarian, remote, or patronizing administrative styles too often rewarded and reproduced over many years in the field of educational administration.

Documenting these women's perspectives on their own administrative and leadership work is an important contribution to our knowledge base, but in other ways Canadian research to date has been rather limited. Most study participants thus far have been school-site administrators, principals and vice-principals in publicly funded schools. Moreover, many studies have relied heavily on self-reports by means of interviews and questionnaires, perhaps supplemented by brief observations. It would be inappropriate to draw conclusions from those data about the study participants' behaviour (Shakeshaft, 1989a), and about their

administrative style as experienced by other members of a school organization—especially those with less power, including students and other staff members. Doing so could undercut the credibility of all research-based claims about women's administrative approaches, even those claims based on stronger evidence.

In studies inviting teachers' comments, there is certainly some confirmation of the positive generalizations about practice I outlined earlier. Not surprisingly, there is also evidence of differing perspectives on that practice (e.g., Dempsey, 1992; Gougeon & Hutton, 1992). Research that invites and examines various perspectives on women administrators' practice would help us learn more about the complexities and dilemmas women administrators face as they work with their schools' various constituent groups and try to live out their beliefs. For example, a number of researchers report that women administrative leaders in their studies have a clear "vision" of what they believe a school should be, or that they develop such a vision jointly with their staff (Fennell, 1992; Genge, 1993; Gougeon & Hutton, 1992; Tabin & Coleman, 1993). But what specific values and convictions inform those visions? Is gender considered an issue in schools and schooling? Where are the specific case examples or stories that would help us understand the nature of life in those schools? And what happens when visions differ, or fragment instead of cohering? A study of the life and work of a woman (adult) educator renowned for building a sense of community shows that although she enacted a notion of community inclusive of very different individuals whose personal development is supported by membership in the collective, she invoked her own strong personality and vision to do so (Harris, 1993). That acknowledgment is helpful. We have not yet learned enough about how our women administrators and leaders view or address tensions and contradictions arising among such concepts as collaboration, community, vision, and control (LaRocque & Downie, 1994).

The few analytical efforts to date suggest the need for more detailed and critical case analysis to deconstruct contemporary rhetoric about "women's ways" of administering and leading without devaluing women or their accomplishments. For example, it has been argued that administrators should be guided by the more contextualized and empathetic "feminine" ethic of caring because it is more inclusive than the standardized and rights-oriented "masculine" ethic of justice (Watkinson, 1991). An analysis of specific examples documenting the activities and perspectives of some women regarded as caring educational leaders, however, showed that the women combined care and justice in their attempts to balance a respect for rights with a consideration of the welfare of individuals and groups (B. Young, Staszewski, McIntyre, & Joly, 1993). Arguably, such a perspective enriches our understanding by providing a more realistic picture of the complexities of both justice and caring in administrative practice.

On the basis of their reviews of (largely American) literature, Shabbits (1993) and Shantz (1993), among others, have posited that female administrators are

more “effective” educational leaders than male administrators. Some Canadian researchers and/or their study participants seem to assume or endorse a similarly essentialist viewpoint (e.g., Gougeon & Hutton, 1992; Tabin & Coleman, 1993; J. H. Young, 1993). There is a danger that this claim is developing into a new orthodoxy about women’s administrative style which elides differences between women (some of which may be due to choice and some to the constraints of circumstances) and discounts evidence that some men exhibit similar skills and commitments (Weintraub, 1990). In addition, this new orthodoxy may be used as a standard that works against many women. Those who do not demonstrate this peculiarly “feminine” style may be judged deficient, and those who do may be judged appropriate only for certain kinds of administrative work. Surely it would be more helpful to acknowledge, document, and discuss the various realities, convictions, and practices of our women administrators and leaders than to sentimentalize and reinforce any one too-simplistic stereotype.

#### STILL AN OTHER PERSPECTIVE

If we are building our knowledge base, in some respects, about women’s viewpoints and experiences, we still know very little about the links between those experiences and the policies and politics of various legislative and organizational contexts. For example, in a number of research reports I have cited, study participants or researchers allude briefly to the effect or perceived effect of employment equity policies in some provinces. No one, however, offers any extended investigation or analysis of this multi-faceted and controversial subject.

One Canadian educational administration scholar, Christopher Hodgkinson, has taken a highly critical public stance toward what he terms “affirmative action” programs. He has described such initiatives as an organizational “pathology” (Hodgkinson, 1992, p. 108). His commentary “The Iniquity of Equity: A Politically Incorrect Paper” is a disappointingly cavalier treatment of both gender and equity as issues in education. He refuses to acknowledge the possibility of a knowledge base that incorporates, let alone might be founded on, any but the traditional academic canon created by white Anglo-Saxon males like himself. Indeed, he conceptualizes the educational leader strictly in terms of a “Great Man” model (Gronn, 1993).

Hodgkinson (1992) fears a swell of Political Correctness on Canadian as well as American university campuses. Epp (1993), however, reports from her Canada-wide survey of women graduate students in educational administration that only 30% of respondents had professors who used inclusive language most of the time. Over 60% of respondents said the theories they studied were based on “male experience” most of the time. Respondents indicated that it was left to women students to introduce content on women’s experiences and that those initiatives were not well received by some male professors and classmates. Appar-

ently, feminist perspectives and equity issues represent at most an undercurrent rather than a tidal wave in Canadian educational administration programs.

Feminist thought is only beginning to affect Canadian educational administration, although for years it has been a significant dimension of work in other areas of educational theory and research, leading to “new questions, new models, and new methods” (Gaskell & McLaren, 1991, p. 8). Other factors besides the ignorance, denial, and attachment to the status quo that persist in some quarters constrain our feminist scholarship. Given Canada’s small population and the particularly “small worlds” of Canadian education and its administration, ethical issues of confidentiality and the identifiability of study participants virtually preclude some research projects, or at least limit severely how findings may be reported. As well, feminist scholars have an activist orientation that means they direct precious energy and effort to advocacy and administrative work, often reducing their time available for traditional scholarly endeavours (Reynolds, 1991).

Overall, the increased number of women students and faculty members—even though many of them disclaim any association with “feminists”—is creating a greater demand that women’s diverse experiences and perspectives, as well as men’s, be taken into account and legitimized as knowledge. But it has not happened yet. Our response to the Greenfield challenge has been, in part, to make visible the Canadian schools and schooling that earlier theorizing had rendered invisible. I hope our response to feminist challenges will be to make women and gender more visible in our conceptualizations and organizations. We need other perspectives.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> I thank Erwin Miklos, Tara Fenwick, Linda LaRocque, Carol Harris, and an anonymous reviewer for their various forms of critical assistance during the development of this article.
- <sup>2</sup> It is generally acknowledged that there is no one “feminism” or feminist perspective. I use the term to apply to orientations that “insist on the importance of gender” as a social and historical construct that has been the source of many forms of inequality for women in relation to men, and that are concerned with remedying those inequalities (Gaskell & McLaren, 1991, p. 2). Feminist research and analysis begins with women’s experiences and perspectives.
- <sup>3</sup> I use this term as it has been defined by Allison (1991, p. 1) to refer to “research and graduate study” in educational administration.
- <sup>4</sup> The most recent and most comprehensive attempt is *Understanding Canadian Schools: An Introduction to Educational Administration* (Levin & J. Young, 1993).
- <sup>5</sup> I refer, in particular, to *The Canadian Administrator*, the *Journal of Educational Administration and Foundations*, and the *Canadian School Executive*. Of course, pertinent articles also appear in more general Canadian education journals.
- <sup>6</sup> Nixon surveyed a sample of women administrators and women teachers about attitudes and beliefs affecting their career orientations (see Nixon & Gue, 1975). Nixon herself was just the third woman to be awarded a doctorate by the University of Alberta’s Department of Educational Administration and that was in 1975, almost two decades after the department was founded.

- <sup>7</sup> For example, Dempsey and Reynolds (1992) found that both men and women supervisory officers felt their work was too all-consuming. The men more often than the women, however, had spouses who worked exclusively in the home or held only part-time jobs outside the home. It is not surprising, then, that women respondents were more likely to hire others to accomplish aspects of domestic work.

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